

# THE ELEPAIO

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GEORGE MUNRO

(From Hawaiian Life, August 8, 1959.)  
( By Virginia Dennis )

In December of 1890 a slender young man arrived in the Hawaiian Islands from New Zealand to collect bird specie.

George Munro came here with H. C. Palmer to add to the world famous bird collection of Lord Walter Rothchild. The famed collection is located at Tring, England.

Since that time Mr. Munro has become known as Hawaii's "Bird Man" and more recently, in fact since 1950, he has achieved fame as the "Johnny Appleseed of Diamond Head."

We visited George Munro the other day. He is a lively 93--alert, interested and spruce. His home is at the foot of Diamond Head and it is his habit to climb the trail up the face of this landmark of ours as often as once a week or once each two weeks.

"I start up the trail at a moderate rate," he laughed, "and by the time I am half way, I'm going full blast!"

"Yes, and he is good for at least two hours of this!" slender, gray-haired Mrs. Munro added.

In the past nine years George Munro has had a determined interest in trying to save and propogate the endemic small plants--as he calls them, the dry land flora--of Hawaii.

He and his nephew Hector have planted 99 species on the slopes of Diamond Head. Among these are native daisys, mints and the wiliwili plant. Their weekly or two-weekly trek up Honolulu's world famous mountain is for this purpose.

"We planted 4,000 wiliwili seeds alone," George Munro told me. "And at least one third of them have grown and are going strong."

I asked him where he has gotten the tremendous variety of seed over the years.

"People from all over the Islands have sent it to me," he answered. "Also, I have received it from the Board of Agriculture."

He went on to say that in many cases the seed does not germinate for several years so that there is always an element of suspense and "something to wait for."

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George Munro was born in a farming community called Cleveland, near Auckland, New Zealand. His brother still lives on the family-owned 100-year-old ranch there.

It was there he began to develop his intense interest in birds and plants.

He showed us a great glass case with rare specimens of birds that he had "stuffed," as the layman would say. Each one was beautifully done. They are the art of a perfectionist--no feather out of line, no lump or ridge to mar the smoothness of neck or head or breast.

We saw the spectacular sooty tern which Munro collected on the adjacent island of Mokumanu; we saw the almost ethereal white fairy tern which he took on Midway; we saw the dramatic black-and-blue dollar bird from Australia, and we saw a branch full of vari-colored Australian parakeets.

Incidentally, for parakeet lovers--and we are among them with our chattering Manu who has made several Pacific crossings with us--these early parakeets were much smaller than the present day branch of the family which has flourished so successfully all over the world in the past 10 or more years.

From 1917 until 1941, George Munro spent a great deal of his time banding birds. He and his helpers did this on many of Hawaii's off shore islands.

Seeing the specimens he has of these many sea and shore birds I asked him, "How in the world did you come by these?"

"Not so hard as one might think," he enthused. "You see, we went out to these little dots of land at dusk. When the birds returned to nest for the night, we were able to take them from their burroughs as they went to roost.

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At one time Munro collected bird specimens for the U.S. Army. At another time he mounted a comprehensive selection of birds for the Bishop Museum's Dr. Kenneth Emory.

His remembrances of Hawaii's bird life date way back.

"Why, I can remember when I first came here collecting for Lord Rothchild," he smiled. "Almost immediately I was able to climb Tantalus, and would you believe it, there was a lake up there and the first birds I saw were a couple of ducks paddling around!"

He says there is a small seasonal lake inside Diamond Head, too.

Munro's book, "Birds of Hawaii," well known among collectors and bird lovers, was printed here in Hawaii in 1944. It has many colored plates in it and has been a source of reference for both outdoor enthusiasts and writers.

I have had it practically from its printing date and my own copy is more than well-thumbed. I asked Munro how long it had taken him to compile its accurate and interesting data and he laughed, "Well, from 1890 when I came here until 1944 when it was published!"

During the years of my own growing up on the Big Island, my mother, a great naturalist, spent a good deal of time acquainting me with our Hawaiian birds. In fact our ranch on the side of Mauna Kea was and is still named after the elusive oo bird.

It was always a great sorrow to her that the noisy and destructive mynah bird had been introduced here. They were great killers of our endemic and beautifully colored Hawaiian birds.

I talked with Munro about these native birds and was pleased beyond words to hear that many of them, including the apapane and the elepaio, are coming back strong.

They have been receiving great encouragement from the Audubon Society here and perhaps, too, they have discovered some means of defense or at least good propaganda against some of the imported bird life.

As well as some of the better known Hawaiian birds, we have an owl and a hawk which are endemic to these Islands. This is not too generally known. And of course, our well known Hawaiian goose, the nene, which is very scarce.

Munro told us that in 1939 Charles Dunn started the first Audubon Society in Hawaii. It is a very active group. Munro himself for a long time has been trying to have Kapiolani Park made into a bird refuge. He still has hopes.

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As for the work of seed planting on Diamond Head, he is very gratified that Honolulu's Boy Scouts have joined him.

"They have taken great interest and are doing a fine job," he said.

"They have even made maps for us," he told me, and made a quick trip into his study to get me one.

George Munro was among the first to fight for protection of the golden plover, that slender bird which is the favorite of Island hunters.

This is the little bird which flies non-stop in about 24 hours from Alaska to Hawaii twice each year. It spends about half of its time here.

The plover is wonderful to eat broiled, but like Munro and others, it seems a shame to me for this stout-hearted and stout-winged little bird to fly thousands of miles for an overseas vacation only to end up on some hunters well-filled plate.

I was so interested in talking with George Munro about the birds and the bees that I nearly forgot to ask him what his formal profession had been.

"Oh, heavens! I have been a rancher all my life! A cattle rancher--I managed ranches on Molokai, Kauai and Lanai. Even went back to New Zealand for four years, but back I came!"

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As we sat chatting in the warm afternoon in his Waikiki home I asked him, "I suppose you have seen a big change in the Waikiki area?"

This very much alive man of 93 years laughed out loud in remembrance.

"Gracious, yes! The first time I came out to Waikiki I was living downtown. Waikiki was a complete wilderness then and miles away from the city.

"Why, I lost my way going back--it was night by then and I had to make my return via the North Star. Made it, too! Has it changed--why, Waikiki's a city all its own today!"

So with this charming reminiscence of early Waikiki to startle us a bit, we left the Munros and went out into the warm afternoon to wander our way home along the Miracle Mile.

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The Garden Club graciously invited Margaret Titcomb and Charles Lamoureux, as representatives of the Hawaii Audubon Society, to attend the dedication ceremonies of Na Laau Hawaii and the unveiling of the plaque honoring George Munro on his 96th birthday, May 11, 1962. They were also privileged to enjoy a reception at the home of

Mrs. A. A. Carswell after the dedication.

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Dear Editors: ....

April 15, 1962

I set out to "lay a foundation" for a "Living Museum" of our endemic dryland plants. This accomplished, I leave it to others to carry on. My people will continue planting and caring for the plants till Mr. Dunlap, State Park Director, and the Garden Club can make some arrangement for its development and upkeep; and I am sure the Hawaii Audubon Society will continue its interest and help in any way it can. My quest for seeds of the plants needed will not abate.

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Very sincerely  
/s/ GEORGE C. MUNRO  
George C. Munro

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PLANTS ENDEMIC TO HAWAII NOW GROWING AT KE KUA'AINA  
By George C. Munro

Argemona alba var. glauca: Puakala, Hawaiian poppy. One plant is flowering where the fine crop died last year. There is plenty of seed in the ground and plenty will come up later.

Portulaca cynosperma: From a carton of seeding tops sent by the Drs. DeGener. This seems to be established, where not crowded by other plants.

Hibiscus brackenridgii: Tree form. From seed gathered from rare plants on Lanai, this fine flowering small tree grew at the Kanepuu forest on Lanai. Hector Munro sent me seed in 1952 which was planted below Ke Kua'aina. One plant is all that came up, and we transplanted it to Ke Kua'aina where it grew to eight feet high and flowered for four months in 1957, two months in 1958 and one month in 1959 and died in 1960. Young plants came up in 1960 and were tended by friends and there are now three fine plants 22 inches high. More came up on the site in 1961 and a number are 10 inches high. Plants from seed of the low form of this species gathered by Mrs. Adolph Desha, Lanai have branches six inches long. Deer will probably exterminate the tree form of the species on Lanai so it is hoped Ke Kua'aina will save it.

Hibiscadelphus hualalaiensis: Haukuahiwi. Seed of this rare plant from Mr. Landgraf, District Forester, Hilo, Hawaii, has produced five plants up to nine inches high.

Gossipium tomentosa: Mao or Huluhulu, Hawaiian cotton. Seed from the crater of Diamond Head germinated at Ke Kua'aina. It was the only plant to come up this year from seed planted in the open, showing what an advantage we have from the water supply and Jessie's nursery.

Kokia sp. This is either K. rockii or K. cookei, both rare plants. It is the only plant surviving of the many species from my home nursery from 1951 to 1955 when it was discontinued. Water had to be carried, and plants died if the writer was off for a longer period than usual. From then to this year we have depended on seed planted on the site but there we found competition from exotics almost prohibitive. This competition, of course, can be removed in time.

Sapindus oahuensis: Hawaiian Lonomea, alulu or kaula. This was a fine plant in 1958 about two feet high. It is no higher now but still alive.

Erythrina sandwicensis: Wiliwili. I started to plant seed of this tree around Diamond Head on April 26, 1950. Seed was furnished by the Board of Agriculture and Forestry and Hector G. Munro from Lanai. I and companions planted from Fort Ruger on the east to Fort Ruger on the west. My companions planted most on the upper levels and I on the lower slopes. Members of the Hawaii Audubon Society and Boy Scouts planted for one day on the east side. Over 4000 seeds were planted and perhaps one third germinated. These are now about twelve feet high, covered with an exceptionally heavy crop of leaves now turning yellow and presenting a wonderful sight. This is surely evidence that they will flower before the year is out.

Munroidendron racemosum: This remarkable tree was known to the Kauai Hawaiians as Pokalakala (rough head) which aptly describes it. The writer saw a small tree on the Makaweli lands, now a canefield, in the 1890's. Botanist Charles N. Forbes found a few trees of it in the Nonou mountains and one on the Kaupu range in October 1916 and described it as Tetraplasandra racemosa. Laurence Howland McDaniels collected a variety in the Nonou mountains in 1927, described by Dr. Earl Edward Sherff who placed it in a new genus which he named Munroidendron in my honor in recognition of the help my botanical collections are to botanists. The tree was lost sight of till Tadayuki Kato found one in the Nonou mountains on February 4, 1961. Mr. Kato is studying with Dr. Charles Lamoureux, Botanist at the University of Hawaii, and sent Dr. Lamoureux some fruits which he generously shared with me. This started Jessie growing plants for Ke Kua'aina with good results. Mr. Kato said the tree was about 40 feet high and from 20 to 24 inches in diameter, "rather broad branching." There are three trees of this species now growing at Ke Kua'aina, the largest with a sturdy stem eight inches high and a crown of fine large leaves.

Nesoluma polynesium: Keahi. So far there are only two of these trees about two inches high.

Osmanthus sandwicensis: Puaa or olupua. Only one about five inches high.

Gardinia brighami: Hawaiian Mao. A number of plants of this rare tree, the tallest over three inches high, are growing at Ke Kua'aina. There was a very good germination of seed from the Kanepuu forest on Lanai, sent by Mrs. Desha. Their growth has been slow but they look well and healthy.

Lipochaeta lobata var. albesens: This one of the many species of Nehes in Hawaii grew naturally at Ke Kua'aina. It flowers heavily and young plants come up from the seed. It helped to convince us that . . . the locality was a good one for a sanctuary of endemic Hawaiian plants.

Bidens cuneata: This plant was not seen from the time W. A. Bryan collected a specimen on Diamond Head in 1903 till Dr. Charles H. Lamoureux and Mr. Irwin Lane found it on the rim of Diamond Head and sent me seed. It is the first of Jessie's jiffy pot plants to flower at Ke Kua'aina and a young plant has germinated from its seed.

Bidens torta: From seed sent by the Drs. Degener there are a number of plants up to six inches high.

Alyxia olivaeformis: Maile, dryland form. Seed from Mrs. Desha, gathered at the Kanepuu forest, produced plants but so far these are slow of growth.

Ipomoea tuboides: A vine of this flowered in 1957 but did not seed. Its location makes it difficult for me to watch and it is feared that the hawkmoth caterpillar has been denuding it. It is a remarkable plant and worthy of perseverance in growing it.

Breweria menziesii: This rare plant has exceeded all expectations. Seed sent by Mrs. Desha gathered at the Kanepuu forest has produced plants over forty inches long.

Canavalia galeata: Two plants of this nice flowering vine are growing below Ke Kua'aina where seed was planted some years ago. Our experience with this plant is comparable to what we had with C. lanaiensis. When watered in the dry season, it died when the heavy winter rains came.

Canavalia lanaiensis var. munroi: There is only one plant of this at present but there is plenty of seed in the ground.

Sophora chrysophalla: Mamani. There are two of these about five inches high.

Myoporum sandwicense: Naio. Three plants of this are growing nicely. The tallest is nine inches high.

Cuscuta sandwicensis: Hawaiian Kauna'oa. Emblematic of Lanai. A patch of this parasite appears at intervals below Ke Kua'aina. Other patches of it have been found recently on other parts of Na Laau Hawaii. It is very spectacular when growing in a mass. It kills some plants, but others resist it. A small patch of it at Ke Kua'aina can easily be watched.

Boerhavia diffusa var. tetrandra: Alena. This remarkable plant grows naturally on the edge of Ke Kua'aina, its tuberous root wedged in cracks in the almost solid rock.

Achycranthes splendens: From seed collected by Dr. Lamoureux at Barbers Point, a number of plants up to 14 inches high are doing splendidly.

Chenepodium oahuense: Alaweo or aweoweo. Well established, but will need to be kept in check as it is very aggressive when conditions are favorable.

Panicum cinerium: Hawaiian kakonakona. This fine annual grass grows in masses about once in four years especially on the upper groves of Ke Kua'aina. Last year it was up to five feet high. There are some little patches of it this year, short but quite ornamental.

Doryopteris decora: This fine fern grows naturally at Ke Kua'aina but not with the luxuriance that it does near the lookout at Makalei.

Plants indigenous but not endemic, naturally on the site.

Sida fallax: Ilima. Periodically growing in masses up to five feet high and very spectacular when in flower.

Abutilon incanum: Mao. Also appearing periodically and flourishing for a few years but liable to be injured by blights and scale troubles.

Cassia gaudichaudii: Hawaiian name Heuhiuhi. A fine tree nine feet high was growing on Grove 9 in 1951. Young plants come up from time to time and one is now about five feet high.

Hetropogan contortus: Pili. There is a sprinkling of this grass over most of Ke Kua'aina but not so much as on open ridges of the main part of the park.

Eragrostis variabilis: Variable love grass. Native name Emoloa. This spectacular grass covers the steep hillside of grove 4. Endemics can be grown amongst it.

We have planted some that are not endemic in Ke Kua'aina but these can later be transplanted to the main part of the park. But I think those originally there should be left as long as they do not interfere with endemic plants.

I said in "Attempts to save the shoreside and dryland plants of Hawaii" in Volume 13, No. 1 of "Elepaio", July 1952, that any attempt for that purpose could only be successful if some institution took a perpetual interest in its welfare. This now has more promise than at any time in the past. The Garden Club of Honolulu has become so deeply interested in the idea that there is no doubt but it will do this. A number of other institutions are also interested, further insuring that it will be carried on successfully, and perhaps others for a like purpose branch from it. There is a tremendous amount of work urgently needing to be done at the present time for the small plants of the open range, the Hawaiian kula, on which I spent 34 years of my life.

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Field Trip to Palekeea Trail, April 8, 1962.

Some 13 members and four guests spent an enjoyable day on the Palekeea Trail (Palehua). The interest of the group was greatly divided: photography, botany, a--n--d birding.

The concrete steps approaching the trail caused some "high-stepping" on the part of the ladies, but the improvement is welcome.

The day was beautiful and nature was at her best inasmuch as the heavy rains during the past few months seem to have awakened many apparently dormant seeds.

Though the Ohia lehua, red and yellow, and the Grevilla robusta were in bloom birding was not good. The following species were seen or heard:

White-eye	American Cardinal	Brazilian Cardinal
Linnet	Apapane	Bush Warbler
Elepaio	Mockingbird	Leiothrix

Our return was through the Moanalua area. We saw 3 Cattle Egrets at the Sumida Water Cress Farm.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

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FIELD NOTE: PUNCHBOWL

Mrs. Mary Riggs and I visit Punchbowl quite regularly in order to check on the Pacific Golden Plover and Mockingbird population.

To our surprise and distress we found neither kind of bird on April 8th in the afternoon. We were much confused.

On Sunday, April 15, we were greeted by a more pleasant outlook; 22 plover in all (only 3 of the number were not in breeding plumage). We also saw 5 Mockingbirds, 4 adults and 1 young. It was the young bird that provided our pleasure and anguish on this visit.

As we drove around the North Outer Drive and came near the grove of Formosa Koa we were both aware of an unfamiliar call. We stopped the car and soon saw a small bird on the grass near the trees. It was having "tail trouble" - was being buffeted about by the high wind; was turned upside down several times but, clumsily, always righted itself. It was a well feathered-out little guy. We were certain it was not a sparrow - was too light in color and a bit too small and wrong shape.

The call which first attracted us continued as the wee bird progressed in our

direction. Then, as we looked up into the tree, we saw the parents in the koa--they were Mockingbirds and the young we were watching was the first young of the species either of us had ever seen.

The parents soon flew to the top of the koa and increased their call; baby turned about and started back toward them - first forward a bit, then sideways, then turning and darting toward us only to be ordered back. In the meantime the parents were acting very strangely - were becoming very excited, more so as the little one came nearer to them. The parents flew up and down mingling the directive call with alarm calls, fluttering and darting about in the tree.

Just as baby reached the base of the koa tree, there was a great flash of black and white as both parents dived down amid great confusion intermixed with wild distress calls. And then, we too saw the cause for the alarm; a mongoose came out of the nearby shrubbery. Mid all of the confusion and the distance intervening between the birds and the car, we were certain there was no more baby, however, pa and ma Mockingbird dive bombed the mongoose, making loud and angry calls and also cut off the mongoose's retreat; it tried hard to seek shelter, but was constantly heckled and waylaid by the angry parents. We then realized how poorly equipped the Mockingbirds are to do battle and protect their young. For the time being they certainly made security very evasive for the mongoose.

During the battle we saw a small light bird fly away.

We could only wonder if the above accounts for the small Mockingbird population in Punchbowl. We have counted as many as 12 at various times 1st year.

SUNDAY, APRIL 22: We just had to make a closer check of the area where we had seen the above described scene. We walked over to the koa trees and looking about we saw a light young bird in a Keawe and 2 adult Mockingbirds. We also found the nest in the Formosa koa. Nearby we also saw another adult feeding in the Star Jasmine (*Jasminum pubescens*) shrubbery. This shrubbery is low and dense and unless one looks closely and well - the bird could very easily be overlooked. This one had its bill FULL of food as it flew away. Our deduction is that one must spend more time and then the result will be rewarding. There apparently are more Mockingbirds in this area than we think.

Ruth R. Rockafellow

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#### JUNE ACTIVITIES:

- June 10 - Field trip to Na Laau Hawaii, led by Charles Lamoureux.  
Meet at the Library of Hawaii at 8:00 a.m.
- June 12 - Board meeting at the Auditorium of the Honolulu Aquarium at 7:30 p.m.  
Members are always welcome.
- June 18 - General meeting at the Auditorium of the Honolulu Aquarium at 7:30 p.m.  
There will be a showing of the Audubon film on Birdlife of Hawaii and a short talk by John Bowles on the Island of Lehua.

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